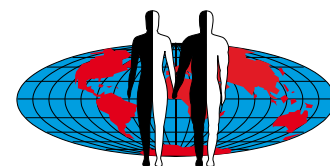


IMAGINE

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100 years for Socialism

The year 2005 marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Socialist Party of Canada. According to J.R. Milne's history, the first meeting of the Executive Committee of our party took place on 19 February 1905 after socialist groups in Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, and the Yukon Territory adopted the platform of the Socialist Party of British Columbia. Some oldtimers in the party dispute this date, recalling 1903 being used as the starting date.

In any case, it has not been an unbroken century. The Russian Revolu-

tion of 1917 captured the imagination and hopes of the workers around the world and led to the formation of many national Communist parties. Many left our party in the misguided belief that communism could be achieved by similar revolutions in this country, and the party disbanded in 1926. Apparently, by 1931, workers were becoming increasingly disillusioned with events in the Soviet Union and that year the SPC was able to reconstitute itself on a more scientific basis. The SPC, along with its new companion parties in the World Socialist Movement, used Marxian scientific theory to determine that a socialist revolution could not have taken place in Russia due to the circumstances prevailing at the time and the subsequent events and development of Russian society. Rather, we said, a new form of capitalism, organized by the state, was evolving, but this was not socialism. Although what unfolded in the Soviet Union, and later in China and Cuba, has proven our analysis to be correct, many workers at the time were duped into believing Bolshevism was the real thing.

Believing that political power must be gained by a majority of workers who understand socialism and want to put an end to capitalism, the SPC has strived to contest elections. We had early successes in electing J. Hawthornthwaite, P. Williams, and J. M. McInnis to the British Columbia legislature, and C.M. O'Brien to the Alberta legislature in the early twentieth century.

We are proud that we have never wavered from our objective—the

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establishment of a society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interests of society as a whole. We reject reformism as a means to establish socialism. To understand Marxian economics is to understand that capitalism cannot be reformed to work in the interests of any other than the capitalist minority. As a political party, we stand alone in this belief. In addition, we advocate the democratic establishment of socialism only when the vast majority of workers understand and choose socialism—not when a minority, a so-called elite vanguard, tell the rest of us what we want and need. This also sets us aside from the many so-called communist, Marxist-Leninist (an oxymoronic title if ever there was one!), and Bolshevik parties and groups. We run our party as we expect socialism to operate—a free association of producers making democratic decisions in the interests of all. We do not have leaders, only elected officials doing the bidding of the rank and file, for it is not “great”



Speaking for Socialism, July 1965

leaders that will bring socialism, but the will of the whole working class. We use scientific socialist analysis based on Marx's theories to interpret historical and current events, and, in so doing, have been proved correct many times while other groups wander all over the political map looking for answers to fit their preconceived ideas.

A part from the aforementioned analysis of the Russian Revolution, our attitude to war is unique and yet simple common sense. At the outbreak of World War I, socialists were forced to develop a response to the patriotic jingoism that led young workers to their deaths in the millions. After careful analysis, it was obvious that the interests of groups of capitalists had clashed and what was at stake was the hegemony of one group over another *vis-à-vis* commerce, strategic territories, trade routes, *etc.*, with the prize being access to more markets and more of the world to plunder and exploit. What was taking place could not be in the interests of workers nor bring socialism any closer. Therefore we oppose all wars, except the class war, on that basis. This was, of course, repeated for World War II, while the various Communist parties wavered for and against war according to the dictates of the Soviet Union. Though opposed to the war when Hitler and Stalin signed the Warsaw Pact, once Hitler invaded Russia these so-called communists changed their tune and were active in recruiting workers to fight—and needlessly die for—the capitalists' interests.

In other areas, such as our analysis of Keynesian economics, the welfare state, national movements, we have differed sharply from the tactics of other parties who always seem to join capitalist parties such as the NDP in putting forth reform-based platforms to attract votes. These platforms invariably lead not to socialism but down a road to nowhere.

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Party stall in Victoria, April 1986



Handbills from 1943 (right) and 1945

What is poverty?

Starving millions of no interest to the dictates of capital

Some time ago, the *Toronto Star* newspaper, Canada's largest, had a campaign entitled "The War on Poverty". Many articles and editorials have pointed out the levels and effects of this social disease. The *Star* has even proudly noted that its founder was a champion of the anti-poverty cause over 100 years ago, but did not note that if, in all that time, it has not been successful, the solution lies in a different course of action. The following letter, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, was sent to the *Star's* editorial board.

Dear Sirs,

Recently my newspaper was not delivered as usual. I called the *Star* circulation department to report it. After patiently navigating through the automatic system, I eventually got to discuss the matter with a real human being. In the course of going through the details, I asked the operator where she was located. She replied, "Nova Scotia". Residing in Ontario and discussing my address, I was somewhat astounded. After some thought, I came to the conclusion that the *Star* must have outsourced this service to a company who had gone to the most compliant jurisdiction for operating costs like minimum wage, labour laws, etc. to gain an advantage over competitors. This lower cost to the *Star* would help the publisher to realize a larger profit and pay bigger dividends to the investors who would, in their turn, continue to invest in the *Star* rather than other enterprises. For this, the *Star* cannot be blamed, as it is the normal way of operating in a profit-driven economy.

But this also means that those big, bad corporations who relocate their production to low wage countries with "flexible" labour laws are only doing what they have to do to survive. This is what drives wages down and

prevents workers from getting out of the poverty cycle. This brings forth the conclusion that as long as this system of increasing profits continues, poverty is not only endemic in that system but is actually an unavoidable consequence. Thus to eliminate the problem is not a matter of political will or morals, or of finding the money. It is simply a matter of who controls the wealth distribution in our society. Once that control passes into the hands of all of society to distribute however we want, then, and only then, will that wealth be used for the common good, including eliminating poverty.

Needless to say this letter was not published. It was never intended to give a real socialist analysis of the problem of poverty, so it would be fitting to add the following.

Poverty usually falls into two categories for the benefit of sociologists, government departments and the media: relative and absolute. The former refers mainly to developed nations to identify those people not receiving enough money to provide the basic necessities of life expected in our society for themselves and their families. It is usually calculated as a percentage, 50 or 60, of the median wage. Absolute poverty is used to refer to many people in the "developing world" who are in life-threatening situations and who require immediate intervention from government or world agencies.

It is worth remarking that, for the vast majority of the time that humans have wandered the earth, hunting and gathering societies were the general mode of producing the necessary goods, and it was rare that these societies experienced starvation. When it did occur, it was entirely due to natural causes such as weather or animal migration patterns, and it affected the

whole society equally. It was only with the coming of the first agrarian revolution and the advent of private property that access to the necessities of life became restricted for some. As class systems developed dividing humans into the oppressors and the oppressed, so did equality and the idea of privileged access to wealth. All the ancient empires—Sumerian, Greek, Roman, Egyptian—had the rich, the free producers, and the slaves, in descending order of wealth and influence. The feudal system, which succeeded the slave system of the empires, operated with the oppressors—the king, the lords, the church, and their entourages—and the oppressed serfs who worked the land to enrich the owners. Marx wrote, "But whatever form [societies] may have taken, one fact is common to all past ages, viz., the exploitation of one part of society by another." (*Communist Manifesto*) Many parts of the world, especially in the "Third World", continued to function with a mixture of these systems while capitalism was establishing itself in Western Europe. While the more primitive societies were falling behind technologically speaking, and inequality was sometimes a part of their systems, it was again rare that starvation occurred as they were very viable societies in their own environments.

The situation changed radically with the adoption of the capitalist mode of production. Based on private property, large-scale commodity production for profit only, and the exploitation of the worker through the creation and theft of surplus value—that extra value produced by the worker over and above his wage—capitalism introduced a new concept, managed scarcity. The value of commodities is determined by the amount of socially necessary labour that is put into them—i.e., the amount of labour under average conditions of work by the average worker—but price

will vary around that value according to availability. If you want to get the highest price for your commodity, then you control the amount available—flooding the market cheapens the commodity; scarcity raises prices. This is why wheat, for example, is locked away in elevators on the prairies until the price rises sufficiently to make it worthwhile to sell and realize a profit, no matter how desperately it is needed. When the price is high, only the wealthy can partake freely, while the rest make do. In other words, capitalism is driven by the necessity to get the best price on the market and realize the highest possible profit, which not only gives you more capital to work with, it can also give you a leg up on the competition. The fact that people are starving in the millions is of no consequence to the dictates of capital. This applies to other necessities of life such as housing, health care, and clean water.

When capitalism reached the less developed areas, it destroyed their local economies by turning cropland into cash crops for the world market and forcing the displaced farmers to become wage earners at the whim of the market and the profitability of the multinational corporations. The ability of the indigenous populations to feed themselves diminished as they lost control of their lands. This vicious cycle is the cause of poverty in the Third World.

Relative poverty in developed nations is also caused by the need to maximize profits and accumulate and attract capital. Capitalism is in a perpetual boom-and-bust cycle. This is because each enterprise decides for itself how they will operate and how much they will produce—the anarchy of production. When the economy is expanding to meet growing demand, the production units must also expand and employ more labour to take advantage of that demand. There is no planned effort by capitalism as a whole to regulate production to match the need. When supply overtakes demand and there is a surplus of goods on the market selling at low prices and



Absolute poverty: trash dump slum in Jakarta, Indonesia

reduced profit, factories are closed down, machinery is scrapped, and workers are laid off to await the next boom. Thus a certain number of workers is needed to meet the demands of expansion and then tossed away as production slows. In the meantime they are unemployed or living on welfare, and if lucky enough to find work, usually it is temporary or at minimum wages. In any case, it is just barely enough to exist. This group is referred to by Marx as “the reserve army” or “the surplus population” and is as necessary to capitalism as wage labour. Marx wrote, “In such cases [of industrial expansion] there must be the possibility of suddenly throwing great masses of men into the decisive areas... The surplus population supplies these masses... Periods of average activity, production at high pressure, crisis, and stagnation, depends on the constant formation, the greater or lesser absorption, and the re-formation of the industrial reserve army or surplus population.” (*Capital, The Process of the Accumulation of Capital*).

There is another form of poverty that you will not hear about in the media. Whenever a mode of producing wealth for a society is put into motion, a set of relations develops simultaneously between the participants. In capitalism, there develops a set of antagonistic relations between the producers who do not own, and the owners who do not produce. The owners determine what will be produced, when, where, and in what manner. The producers must simply follow instructions and the dictates of capital. All workers are subject to strict parameters set by the owners who employ solely at their discretion. Here the reserve army plays another role—that of maintaining those relations so favourable to the capitalist class. Marx writes, “The industrial reserve army, during the periods of stagnation and average prosperity, weighs down the active army of workers; during the periods of over production and feverish activity, it puts a curb on their pretensions,” and, “The overwork of the employed part of the working class swells the ranks of its reserve, while, conversely, the greater pressure that the



Relative poverty: workers queue for food in Oslo, Norway

reserve, by its competition, exerts on the employed workers, forces them to submit to over-work and subjects them to the dictates of capital." (*Capital*)

In addition to the subordinate position of those who actually produce all the wealth, the owner takes all the surplus value the worker has embedded in the product—that value the workers have produced over and above their wages; the source of all profit. This legalized theft is supported by the systems of society that are essential to, and support, the current economic system—the state government and its legislation, the court system to uphold the legislation, the military and police forces to enforce it, and the prison system to punish transgressors, and the media to propagandize the whole thing. This means that the class responsible for producing the wealth of society, not only does not own and control its own product, but it is severely limited in the access they have to that wealth. On the other hand, the tiny minority of owners not only get the lion's share, but they are able to re-invest the surplus profit as capi-

tal to dominate the workers again and increase their capital once more.

This constant growth of capital is the reason we see the great and ever growing gaps in living standards between the multi-millionaires and billionaires who produce nothing, and the workers who struggle to put a roof over their heads, feed their families, pay for health, education, and so on. In this sense, all workers, no matter what their financial situation, are in a state of relative poverty—relative, that is, to what they are entitled to: the whole loaf, not the crumbs. Marx quotes economist James Bray in *The Poverty of Philosophy*:

The workmen have given the capitalist the labour of a whole year, in exchange for the value of only half a year—and from this, and not from the assumed inequality of bodily and mental powers in individuals has arisen the inequality of wealth and power which at present exists around us. It is an inevitable condition of inequality of exchange—of buying at one price and selling at another—that capitalists shall continue to be capitalists, and working men to

be working men—the one a class of tyrants and the other a class of slaves—to eternity. The whole transaction, therefore, plainly shows the capitalists and the proprietors do no more than give the working man, for his labour of one week, a part of the wealth they obtained from him the week before!—which just amounts to giving him nothing for something... The whole transaction, therefore, between the producer and the capitalist is a palpable deception, a mere farce: it is, in fact, in thousands of instances, no other than a bare-faced though legalized robbery."

It can be seen, then, that poverty, relative or absolute, is a natural consequence of the capitalist system. It can be no more eliminated by raising minimum wages, fairer taxation, or income supplements, than an elephant can fly. While we must give credit to the decency of those people and organizations involved in the struggle to improve conditions for fellow human beings, it is tragic that they spend all their time and resources to alleviate a symptom of the problem and nothing at all to eliminate its cause. The effect, like all attempts to reform the capitalist system, is to treat the symptoms and prolong the disease. Poverty, like many of the ills of our world caused by capitalism, can be eliminated only when we, the producers who do not own, finally realize that the resources of the earth and the products of our labour are the common heritage of all humankind, to be shared freely, as needed, among all peoples of the world. Only then, as Marx said, can we put an end to man's prehistory and begin man's history.

—J. AYERS

We welcome correspondence from our readers. Send e-mail to spc@worldsocialism.org or write us at Box 4280, Victoria, BC V8X 3X8, Canada.

A century of socialist journalism

A retrospective of Socialist Party commentary and criticism

In this issue of *Imagine* we are presenting three articles from the annals of the *Western Socialist*, former journal of the Socialist Party of Canada and the World Socialist Party of the United States, to celebrate our history and the dedicated comrades who have worked tirelessly to promote socialism throughout their lives. The parties of the World Socialist Movement believe socialism can be established only when the vast majority of the working class understand what socialism is and choose that society to replace capitalism. Before that can happen, that class must become conscious of its position in capitalism as the producers of all wealth and the owners of nothing, as the exploited class, and, finally, as the class, as a whole, that can bring about the change to socialism themselves. This argument is expounded in the first historical article, "A class conscious majority" by W. A. Pritchard.

The next article deals with the Winnipeg General Strike, an important event in Canadian labour history. It began, as many strikes do, with a demand for higher wages. It was not a call for socialism, and, had that been the case, the Winnipeg workers would have been a minority of the total Canadian labour force. The SPC, therefore, did not see the strike as an opportunity to establish socialism, as did many left-wing groups. As the article's author

notes, "strikes may result in changes and even so-called improvements but this is superficial." While the strike was "a magnificent example of working class solidarity and courage", socialists understand that it is only the complete replacement of the capitalist system that will bring about a lasting improvement in all workers' conditions.

The third article, "What can we do about peace?", echoes the party's attitude to the constant state of war and conflict that exists on our planet. Not only is it as relevant today as when it was first published in 1963, but the ideas it espouses are just as applicable to 1914 when the party's early members had to state a clear response to the impending war. It was clear then, as it is now, that conflicts between nations are really conflicts between competing groups of capitalists over resources, trade advantages, control of strategic routes and areas—in short, maintaining or grabbing an economic edge over another capitalist group. War is, therefore, endemic to the capitalist mode of production, is of no interest or benefit

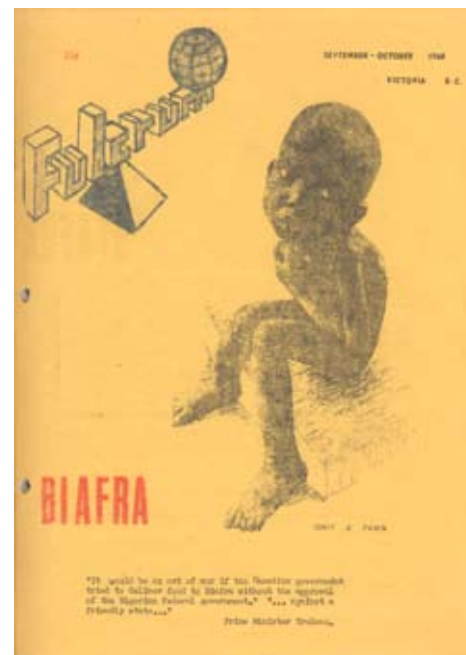
to the workers (indeed it is they who must do the fighting and dying), and will not bring socialism one inch closer. Socialists, then, withdraw from all wars but the class war.

—EDITORS

Right: *The Western Socialist*, journal of the Socialist Party of Canada, Vol. 1 No. 1, Winnipeg, October 1933

Far right: *Fulcrum*, journal of the Victoria Local of the Socialist Party of Canada, September/October 1968

Top: *World Socialist*, journal of the World Socialist Movement, No. 6, Winter 1986–7



A class-conscious majority

(Reprinted from the *Western Socialist*, Vol. 37 No. 275, 1970, pp. 11–13)

...no government can impose its will upon a consciously unwilling majority...

The above truncated extract from an article by a Socialist writer is here presented in this form since it struck me as being a suitable text for a sermon—as some parson might say; or a theme in music which could be developed and presented with a whole series of variations. I shall now try my hand at a transposition or—to use the musician's term—an inversion.

So from the negative to the positive form my transposition might read:

...no conceivable power could successfully resist a consciously willing and determined class conscious majority...

I now replace the quotation as given at the head of this article into the context from which it was taken, by giving the whole of a concluding paragraph of an article by Ivan in the *Socialist Standard* of February, 1969.

If we say, then, that Socialism will be the society of freedom which will not know such disfigurements as political prisoners we are inviting an obvious question. Why are there no socialists in prison for their opinions? The answer is equally obvious. At the moment Socialism, is not a threat to a capitalist state. But the *socialist movement grows through the developing consciousness among workers—and remember no government can impose its will upon a consciously unwilling majority*. So when Socialism is a threat, and the ruling class would like to do something about it—it *will be too late*. (Emph. mine, W. A. P.)

I pursue the line of thought which is herein revealed because, in so many instances throughout the past years—here and in Canada—have I heard well informed socialists, from the

speaker's platform, answer a question in such fashion as to make the confusion of the interested questioner even more confounded.

Following a usually well presented argument for socialism the speaker gets a question: "You have put up a rather persuasive argument and I am interested but I would like to know 'How are you going to do it?' "

The answers I have heard so many times might be brief, bright and brotherly, but decidedly not to the point. "You select your delegate or candidate and send him to Parliament—or Congress, as the case may be." Put this way—it has so often been put just this way to my knowledge—it becomes a "bald and unconvincing" declaration. Of course, it is true, insofar as we know the seat of power to be in these institutions, but such overly simplistic statements—granting them to be true—can result only in greater confusion and misunderstanding than had a direct falsehood been uttered.

Com. Ivan refers to "a consciously unwilling majority." I use the phrase "consciously willing and determined class conscious majority." Both phrases carry the same concept. And that is: a majority fully aware of its position, as members of a class, and aware of the needs of that class.

The class which today constitutes a majority of the population, in all those countries where the capitalist mode of production obtains, is the working class. But the majority of this class is by no means aware of its place in this society as a subjugated and exploited one, and therefore is also unaware of the cause of unemployment, poverty, war, or any other of the horrible features of the current scene. So we say of these: "They are not *class conscious*." Conversely, of that minority within this majority who do understand their status as exploited producers, and realize that this can be abolished through concerted action

and clear knowledge, we say: "These are *class conscious*."

The reason for these *class conscious* being organized into a *political* party, is to engage in well considered and well presented propaganda directed to their *un-class conscious* fellow workers. This calls for an analysis of the character of the power which holds the worker in subjugation—the techniques of brain-washing, distorted information concerning events and peoples, the manipulation of "alleged" educational processes, *etc.*, by which the ruling class is able to keep its ideas as the ideas of society. The workers are thus fooled into accepting these ideas of the masters as being the ideas best suited to the promotion of their material interests. "If it were not for the capitalist where would the worker be? The capitalist creates jobs. And where would we be without jobs?" This crude idea is so often expressed by workers when confronted with the socialist case.

The socialist's task is to work at removing these cobwebs from the mind of the worker; to stress by diligent and simple presentation the contrary idea: "Where would the capitalist be without the worker?" Completely helpless. For all those goods and services required to maintain society are produced by the labor of the working class, and the surplus value created by labor supplies the wealth upon which the idle owner lives and the capital accumulation by which he increases his holdings and his power.

But this power is maintained and protected through the power of the State—that instrument of coercion and administration which has existed, under different forms, in human society since the dawn of civilization and the birth of the property "idea." And in all highly developed countries the seat, and the source, of this power, today, is the institution of "parliament" whatever name it may carry in whatever country.

For the working class to free itself from its present position, it must capture these bastions of power and privilege, and use them as instruments in that endeavor. Because the vast majority of the working class is unaware either of its real status or of the need for doing away with it, as Ivan puts it: "At the moment socialism is not a threat to a capitalist state."

Ivan states, though, "the socialist movement grows through the developing consciousness among workers." We work in our propaganda to speed this growth.

While we indicate parliament as the seat of capitalist power and defender of capitalist interests, suggesting thereby that the capture of political power by the workers calls for the prior capture of parliament, there is much more involved than "selecting our candidate and sending him to the House, *etc.*" And it is incumbent, in my opinion, upon our propagandists to explain these things and not be content merely with a bald and off-hand statement such as this article indicates has been used much too often. If it were only used once that would be once too many.

For the present, then, and until that time when as Ivan says: "the developing consciousness among workers" has produced the resistance to attempted coercion by a "consciously unwilling majority," or, conversely, when "no conceivable power could successfully resist a consciously willing, and determined *class conscious* majority," we carry on the work of education among the workers, opposing and exposing the "ideology" of the ruling class by stressing and elucidating the "ideology" demanded by working class interests.

In short, to make our ideas pervasive; and when these ideas have become sufficiently pervasive then—again making use of Com Ivan's term—"It will be too late," for the masters, or calling upon a phrase once used by this writer on another occasion, "With these agents of power (the state forces) in the hands of an *enlightened majority*, no aggressive minority, no power on earth, can successfully re-establish itself."

So, for the present, "when socialism is not a threat to a capitalist state," and until that time when working class ideas "have become sufficiently pervasive," we make such use of parliamentary elections as we can, for here is a

ready to hand situation—and ready to hand machinery—of which socialists can avail themselves. The day will come when class conscious workers through the agency of their organization (political party) will send their delegates to the seats of power, backed by that ideology which has then become "sufficiently pervasive."

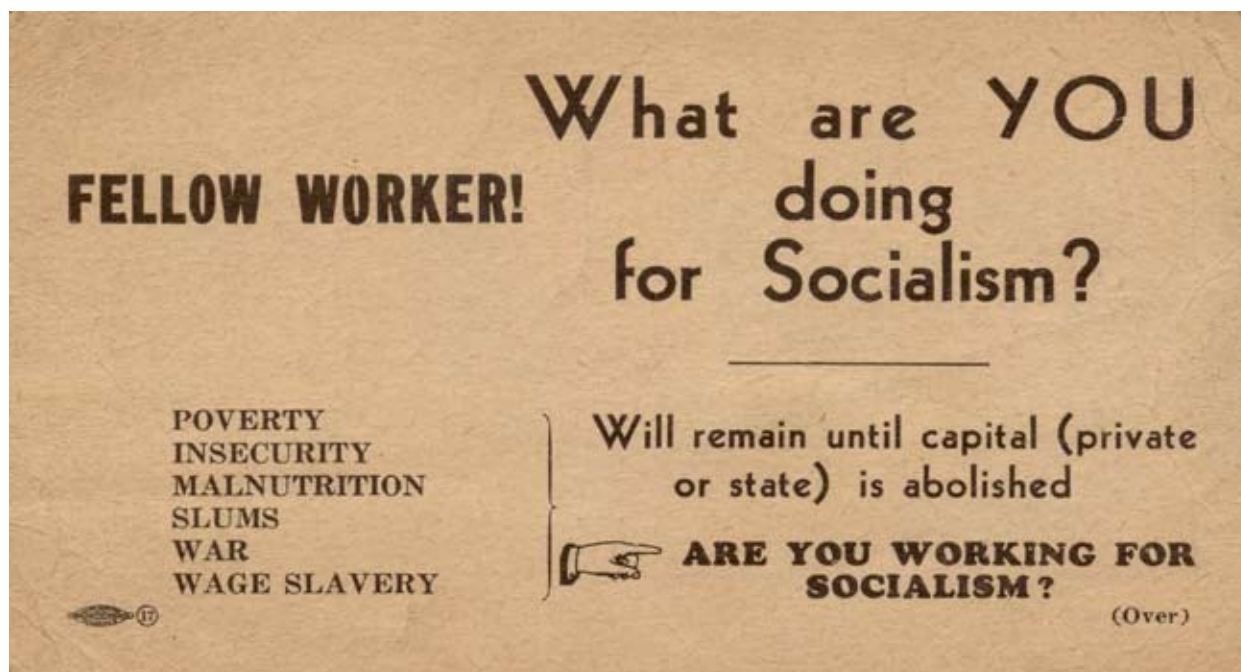
For the present, education is the first priority. An election provides a sounding board for our ideas, and as a barometer to measure our influence.

And for those who may be nominated as candidates at such times and for such purposes as I have outlined, I would suggest their campaign promise be given in this wise.

We are running in this election to spread socialist education. All political parties make promises. We also make one: "We promise *nothing*"—and thus be the only party which is able to keep its promise.

Brethren! Here ends this short and simple sermon. Let us then work, for events are moving rapidly.

—W. A. PRITCHARD



SPC handbill,
circa 1935

The 1919 Winnipeg General Strike

(Reprinted from the *Western Socialist*, Vol. 36 No. 269, 1969, pp. 12-16)

I have been bombarded throughout the past half-century from many quarters to write on this event. Hitherto I have refused, being reluctant to do so, feeling that one cannot deal with events in which one may have been involved and do so with the objectivity necessary. For the same reason I refrain from reviewing books in which I may have been (honorably or otherwise) mentioned.

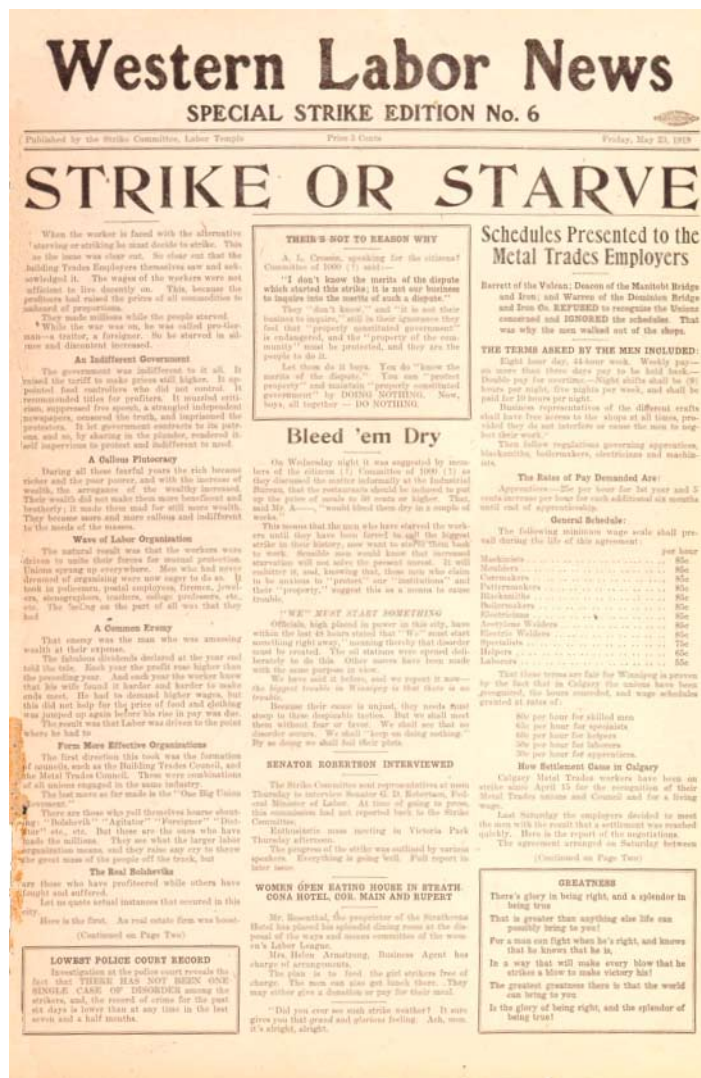
But now, this year being the fiftieth anniversary of that historic event, receiving an official request from the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada, and simultaneously one from the United Steel Workers of America (Canadian Section) I feel I must comply. The Steel Workers, with headquarters in Toronto, will hold their National (annual) Policy Conference in Montreal, May 1st and 2nd, this year, and intend to commemorate the Winnipeg Strike's fiftieth anniversary and have their proceedings covered by national radio and possibly television.

As to the Strike and myself. Contrary to general opinion I had little or almost nothing to do with it personally, and therefore have very little knowledge of all the ingredients which led up to it. That the panic-struck authorities pounced upon me in their blind fury and were successful in having me jailed, does not alter the fact. That I went to Winnipeg at the behest of a committee of workers as a spectator and in the week (approximately) I was there, sitting by invitation once with

the Strike Committee, and addressing a few open-air gatherings, gave the authorities their chance and they took it.

I have no documents in my possession at the moment and must rely only upon a memory which at the age of eighty-one may be defective, although

Also, I understand, a further work on this subject will shortly appear from the pen of David J. Bercuson of Montreal. These are recommended for what they might contain to students of Canadian history. I have but few reservations for the master's opus and these only on rather minor points.



Background of the Strike

To understand the Strike one should place it in the context of the social atmosphere of the country, the position of organized labor (especially in Western Canada), together with the political situation of that time.

The government was a coalition wartime product. The war (to make the world safe for Democracy) was over—but not the peace (the outbreak of which was “more cataclysmic than the outbreak of war.”)

The Government had been operating for some time less and less by statute and more and more by the exigent weapon of “Order-in-Council.” The Meighen administration came to be known as “government by Order-in-Council.” The people were ordered not to eat meat on two days of the week but at the same time were not informed as to how the many poor were to get meat on the other five days. A censorship, under the erudite Col. Chambers was established and hundreds of publications were banned, the penalty for possessing any cited: twenty years in the penitentiary. The governmental “sublimity” slid rapidly downhill to the lowest depths of the “ridiculous.” For under this Order-in-Council such

my contemporaries seem to think it is almost too devilishly keen.

Recommended for reading, though, is a work of some years ago by Dr. D. C. Masters, and there are in Canada two other works by scholars whose names for the moment escape me. Both are from the Toronto University Press.

works as Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Tyndall's *Fragments of Science*, and even the Savoy operas of Gilbert and Sullivan were placed on the governmental "Index Expurgatorious." This in the attempt to ban the socialist and labor classics of a century.

Rapidly rising prices affected all, particularly workers. The allowances to the wives and families of men in the service overseas had not been increased and many hardships were the lot of these folk. Scandals in connection with the war effort were popping up all over the country in which prominent patriots figured: The Ross rifle that jammed; the "Flavelle" affair; and the noise about hay for the armed forces. And when the cry about corruption in the purchase of hay went up governmental donkeys immediately cocked their long ears.

Against these growing enormities Labor, particularly in the West, protested vigorously. They accepted reluctantly the order to eat meat but not on the two specified days of the week; they objected, somewhat as to what they should read, or what a man might have in his own library, but when instructions appeared as to what they should think, they balked.

In British Columbia in 1918, the employees of the Street Railway Co. tied up transportation in Vancouver, North Vancouver, Victoria, and New Westminster for some time, their demands being for raise in pay but more so for a reduction of the working day from nine to eight hours. As one of these strikers said to this writer at the time: "Bill, if we don't get the eight-hour day now, it will be a long time." Many other instances of unrest among the workers could be cited, and all this could be accompanied with the fact of Western Canadian Labor's dissatisfaction with the Canadian Trades Congress and its generally reactionary attitude.

The Strike starts

Into this setting one must place the Winnipeg Strike. So far as I can recall it developed in this wise: the organized workers in the Building Trades tried to

open negotiations with the City's Building Masters on wages and working conditions, stipulating that they wished to have the Building Trades Council, of which they were members, act as their bargaining agency. This was refused out of hand. A long story made short is that was how the building workers went on strike. At the same time the machinists, boiler makers, *etc.*, in what were called the contract shops, tried to open negotiations with the Ironmasters of the City (Manitoba Bridge and Iron Works, Dominion Bridge Co., Vulcan Iron Works, *etc.*) in order to have the rates of pay for the same categories in the railway shops. These rates had been set for the railroads by William G. McAdoo. They were working under a signed agreement, the result of collective bargaining, at approximately 40% higher rates than their brothers in the contract shops. As with the Building Masters, the Iron Masters refused to bargain. They, like the building trades workers, wanted a bargaining agency: the Metal Trades Council.

And that is how it started.

Some highlights

A short account of a large and important event, such as the Winnipeg Strike, requires that specifics must give way to generalities. Nonetheless I'll try to deal with some highlights as I can best recall them from my week's sojourn in Winnipeg during the Strike.

Early in May 1919, the workers in the Metal and Building Trades had already "hit the bricks." The international offices of all these unions gave no endorsement and no help. These men were on strike for a principle and without pay. Their only recourse was appeal to the general body of the city's workers. And this body was, of course, the Trades and Labor Council. So, May 6th, 1919, the Trades Council was confronted with the question of either giving support to the strikers, or not. Following long and heated debate the decision was made to take a vote of all the Council's affiliates on the question of a strike in support of the building trades and metal workers.

The result was announced at the next Council meeting, May 13th, 1919: over eleven thousand in favor; five hundred against. The strike was called for 11 a.m. Thursday, May 15th.

Seventy unions voted, all in favor. According to the report of H. A. Robson, K. C., appointed commissioner to investigate and report on the strike the vote was fairly conducted. From questions he claims to have put to certain members and officers of eighteen unions, some of whom were opposed to the strike "stated that the large majority had voted in favor..." [sic]

I found out quickly what would be considered a phenomenon under other circumstances and in another geographical area. Some thirteen thousand organized workers on strike in a city, have their numbers greatly augmented, almost overnight, by the sudden strikes of unorganized workers, from candy workers to newspaper vendors. This demanded attention and forthwith organizing committees were created to organize the striking unorganized.

The police had also voted and came out on strike, only to be requested by the strike committee to go back to their jobs. The reason for this should be apparent to any serious analyst of the situation. Not until they were confronted with the demand made later to denounce the strike, express regret for their part in it did the bulk of the police force appear as strikers. They were forced out by the forces of "Law and Order," and their places filled with an assortment of second-story men, forgers, burglars, *etc.*, chiefly imported from Minneapolis. I was to meet with and observe these pillars of justice in the County Jail later. But that is another story.

What lesson this strike committee was soon to learn (composed of men of different political outlooks though it was) was that when a withdrawal of efficiency on the part of labor takes place in a community everything stops. No milk and bread for the people, or for hospital needs, *etc.*, and this affects not merely men and women but infants.

In this acute situation the committee acted with good sense and promptitude. The committee was composed of fifteen members and was thereupon named the "inner" committee. It organized another committee of three hundred known as the outer committee, which then subdivided into communities specifically charged with those functions that would keep the city population as a viable community. So milk and bread, *etc.*, supplies were maintained, transportation organized, and so on. Of course, there were inconveniences but the city was kept alive—and by the good sense, humanitarianism, and organization of the workers. The bosses could not do it. Those who had performed these social services, *etc.*, heretofore for wages now were doing it without pay. This might give one a gleam of light as to just how socially unnecessary wages and the wage system really are.

Significant too was the action of the Strike Committee in requesting the theatre owners to re-open. This was a measure designed to keep people from congregating on the streets, a condition conducive to volatile and irresponsible action that could occur through the gathering of crowds, and one which, no doubt, would have been welcomed by the authorities as an excuse for violent repression.

So that the theatre owners would not be accused by the strikers (and one must understand that the families involved there numbered well over thirty thousand) placards were placed outside the theatres "Open by Authority of the Strike Committee." One theatre manager had thrown upon his picture screen this message: "Working in Harmony with the Strike Committee."

Also, in contrast with so many other strikes, this had no demonstrations, protests, or those other manifestations of which we see so much today. People were exhorted to keep the peace and keep off the streets. To this end numerous public meetings took place in the various parks of the city and its environs. The only parades of which

this writer has knowledge were the rather huge parades of the returned soldiers sympathetic to the strike, and the significantly small parades of those supporting the Citizen's Committee, composed chiefly of the officer caste. Common sense on both sides in this connection seemed to have been used by both parade managers. They paraded at different times, or, if not, trotted off in different directions. The Strikers' soldier element also held daily sessions, of what they termed their "parliament" in Victoria Park.

How the Strike was broken

Attempts were made from time to time by elements on both sides to come to a compromise and end the dispute. I remember being asked to accompany a delegation in this connection to meet with one from the anti-strike soldiers. The meeting was presided over by Canon F. G. Scott, senior chaplain of the First Division in France. He came to Winnipeg to look after "his boys," evidently had no interest in politics, a very gracious and charming individual, and with a deep sympathy for the Strike and the strikers. He seemed to me, from my short observation, to be very much attached to Russell.

The members of the delegation which I accompanied were Winning,

Russell and Scoble. The spokesman for the other side was a young army officer, an attorney, Captain F. G. Thompson. My immediate impression of him as the talks opened was that he had now discovered the first arena in which he could demonstrate his legal expertise. All his questions were such as to provide material for legal action and he was definitely addicted, in my opinion, to the job of involving Russell in a legal tangle. I, thereupon, advised Russell not to attempt the answering of the obviously loaded questions. There may have been many other efforts on both sides towards affecting a settlement, but the foregoing is the only one of which I have any personal knowledge.

It was at the close of this abortive meeting that I overheard Canon Scott tell Russell that he had been ordered home to Eastern Canada.

As I remember Winnipeg, during the week of my stay (I had a longer stay later on, but that was if I remember aright, quite involuntary) it was the most peaceful city I had ever seen, a well disciplined and behaved community, singularly free from the crimes which are so noticeable in our cities today, and remained so until the installation of the special police (criminals and thugs already referred to).



Strikers surround the Board of Trade building



The Mounted Police charging down Main Street, 21 June 1919

The strike did not seem to be weakening, not to the extent that the employers expected, so drastic action was needed. And this was used in the midnight, or early morning, raids on the homes of certain men. The six who were so unceremoniously “kidnaped” from their warm beds in the wee morning hours, were Russell, Queen, Armstrong, Heaps, Ivens and Bray. R. J. (Dick) Johns had not been in Winnipeg during the entire strike period, but was carrying out his duties as a member of the War Relations Labor Board in Montreal. I was taken from a CPR train in the city of Calgary, on my way home to Vancouver.

At the same time, several labor sympathizers from North Winnipeg who had the misfortune to carry “foreign” sounding names, especially Russian, were also swept into the net, and shipped with the rest to Stony Mountain Penitentiary. This I opine was (to slightly paraphrase the inimitable phrase of Gilbert and Sullivan’s Pooh-Bah) undertaken as “merely corroborative detail, intended to give artistic

verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing (narrative).“

By this means was the strike broken. What lessons can be taken therefrom depends on how the workers now view the event. Unknown, perhaps, to a large majority of Canadian workers is the fact that what is now accepted without question—the principle of collective bargaining—resulted. Today the metal contract shops in Winnipeg all have agreements with the United Steel Workers. Several other so-called problems were attended to as a result of the Mather and the Robson commissions.

Lessons of the Strike

But while forms may have changed, and some “improvements” made—for instance in the living conditions, *etc.*, of lumber workers and others—the basic fact remains. The workers are still wage recipients and the masters the beneficiaries of the surplus values extracted from the result of labor’s effort.

The workers still must engage in confrontations and even conflicts with their masters. The labor history since

Winnipeg is replete with instances: the longshoremen of Vancouver—the then only remaining organized body of waterfront workers on the Pacific Coast in 1922; the strikes of miners and lumber workers; the Kirkland Land Strike of 1941. But why go on?

Strikes may result in changes and even so-called improvements but this is but superficial. This will continue until the workers in sufficient numbers free themselves from the concepts of this society, from the ideas that bind them to the notion that the present is the only possible social system, and recognize that under this system “the more things change the more they remain the same”; that even now in their struggles over wages and conditions, like the character in *Alice in Wonderland* they have to keep running harder in order to stay in the same place.

But the Winnipeg Strike will go down in history as a magnificent example of working class solidarity and courage.

—W. A. PRITCHARD

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This, then, is our legacy, to be passed on to new generations of workers until they, as a mass, come to their senses and realize there is a better way to produce and distribute wealth. In this issue of *Imagine* we have tried to give you a sense of our history, but it is to the future we must look to resolve the antagonisms and outrages of the capitalist system. To put an end to poverty, inequality, class-based society, starvation, war, and want, there is, as there has always been, but one answer—to establish a socialist society. No amount of reforms, beseeching the government to act in our interests, or petition-signing will suffice. A simple vote for real socialism, and the willingness to put it into practice once others have done likewise, will do the trick.

—EDITORS

What can we do about peace?

Nobel Peace winner joins Nuclear Club

(Reprinted from the *Western Socialist*, Vol. 30 No. 232, 1963, pp. 5-7)

It was no surprise to learn that Lester Pearson has decided that Canadian military forces should be equipped with nuclear and atomic warheads and arms. It does not surprise the socialist one bit to encounter this switch in a professed opponent of A-arms to one of supporter. History is laced with people

who profess one thing before election to office and either change half-way there or when elected.

Does it make any difference whether or not Canada is to become a member of the "nuclear club"? I do not think so. To the mass of people throughout the world the result will be the same—death and destruction—with or without these arms for Canada, unless we prevent war. How, then, can we pre-

vent war? What are we to do about it? These seem to be pertinent questions.

At first glance it appears as though we can do very little about it. General Norstad, President Kennedy and now Lester Pearson have had their say and that seems to be the end of the matter. It is asserted, by some, that the working class will have no say in the matter nor have ever had a say on the question of war. In a sense, however, this statement is quite false. We have had and still can have much to say about it. We have so far elected to support things as they are and the result is apparent to all—a future which threatens death and destruction to all mankind. Can we change this situation? Assuredly we can.

In the first place, instead of repeating like parrots the phrases spewed out of the television and radio boxes, we can investigate this supposedly best of all possible worlds—explore beneath the clouds of subterfuge, deceit and lies. Purposeful investigation must lead to the discovery of the *cause* of war with all of its varying degrees of horror, death, and destruction.

What is it, then, that gives rise to conflicts between nations? What is it, furthermore, that engenders disagreements and strikes between employer and employed? To find cause for the first question is to discover the answer to the second. Nations are forever in conflict because the owners of the means of life within these nations must compete and struggle with one another in furtherance of their material interests. They must forever strive to outdo one another in the never-ceasing search for markets and sources of raw materials. In the jungle world of capitalism the maxim must be *compete* (with no holds barred) or *die*! Herein lies the key to the problem. In

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Maryon and Lester Pearson receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, 1957

Notes on our early history

A timeline of the early years of the Socialist Party of Canada

1905 19 February: First meeting of the Dominion Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada. • Hawthornthwaite and Williams elected to BC legislature. • Party propagandist E. T. Kingsley, who lost both legs in a railway accident, publishes his own journal, the *Western Clarion*, with a circulation of 4–10 000.

1907 Toronto members arrested at a meeting.

1908 Kingsley addresses a meeting of 1000 in Winnipeg. Meeting stopped by police. • D. G. Mackenzie, a party member since 1904, becomes editor of the *Clarion*. Recognised as the party's finest writer, he also wrote the Manifesto for the party.

1909 SPC and International Workers of the World (IWW) members arrested for 'speaking out against the master class'. Comrades Matthews and Hemmings spend seven days in one of 'His Majesty's Drawing rooms' rather than pay a \$1 fine for holding a street meeting. • The DEC issues a resolution not to affiliate with the Second International, which consisted mainly of groups interested in immediate reforms. • O'Brien elected in Alberta.

1910 Some foreign-language locals break away to form separate groups over reformism. • O'Brien criticized in the legislature for giving a lecture on socialism rather than addressing the question.

1911 The Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB) and its ideas disseminated throughout Canada by the *Socialist Standard*, which heavily influences the non-reform section of the party. The Toronto local breaks away to form the Socialist Party of North America and becomes the first

Canadian group to adopt the SPGB principles. SPNA later dissolves and some members return to the SPC.

1912 A meeting on Powell Grounds, Vancouver, addressed by Pettipeace, Lestor, and the IWW broken up by police 'Cosacks' and 25 arrested. Three IWW members given three months for refusing to swear on the Bible. Several more attempts to hold meetings at the same venue also broken up by police. • Williams elected in BC but eventually allies with the Social Democratic Party.

1913 O'Brien defeated in Alberta, despite the existence of 26 locals in the province.

1914 Canada enters WWI, "the war for democracy", while suppressing free speech at home. Religious groups, including the Salvation Army, continue to hold street meetings undisturbed. • Socialist Party Manifesto to the workers of Canada: "Wars have their origin in the disputes of the international capitalist class. The war will claim many workers' lives in a quarrel that is not theirs. Considering the fact that the workers produce all the wealth but receive only a pittance in return, only the struggle to end this injustice is worthwhile. Workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains! You have a world to gain!"

1916 Comrades J. Reid and W. Gribble arrested and imprisoned for sedition. • SPC continues its anti-war stance and contests elections.

1917 Conscription introduced and opposed by unions and, of course, the SPC: "Thus we protest emphatically against the proposed Act to enforce military service upon us. Our masters' quarrels do not arouse

any enthusiasm in us. Our quarrel has ever been, since we realized our position as slaves, and ever will be, until our status as slaves is abolished, a quarrel against the master class the world over. The International Working Class has but one *real* enemy, the International Capitalist Class." • Several members, including Tom Cassidy, Sid Rose, Ginger Goodwin, Dave Aitken, Joe Naylor, Roy Devore, Alex Shepard, and Moses Baritz, go into hiding or are arrested for evading or opposing the draft. Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Articles by revolutionaries such as Lenin and Trotsky appear in the *Clarion*. Later, after events in Russia develop further, skepticism and then outright opposition grow to the new order that grows out of the revolution. • Government hysteria and "red scare"—organizations promoting governmental, social, industrial, economic change are banned. • SPC meeting broken up by returning "patriotic" soldiers and party offices destroyed.

1918 The *Western Clarion* banned and replaced with the *Red Flag*, which in turn is suppressed and replaced with the *Indicator*.

1919 Winnipeg General Strike: SPC not directly involved, but five of eight union leaders imprisoned were SPC members (G. Armstrong, R. Bray, R. J. Johns, W. A. Pritchard, R. B. Russell) and party literature was used in the trial to show that the strike was "the work of the devil".

1920 Ban on the *Western Clarion* lifted. The Third International triggered an examination of the methods of revolution: insurrection or parliamentary route. • The Workers' Party of Canada formed, later to become The Communist Party. Many SPC members leave to join. •

G. Armstrong elected to the Manitoba legislature.

1925 The *Clarion*, reflecting the declining membership, ceases publication.

1931 The Socialist Party of Canada is re-formed by Armstrong, Lestor, Neale, Breeze, Kaiser, and others. The declaration of principles of the Socialist Party of Great Britain is adopted.

1932 The *Western Socialist* journal launched. • Clarity on Russia: Bolshevism examined and found wanting, and not socialist.

1939 Solid opposition to WWII on the same grounds as the first: a war between capitalist interests and having nothing to do with the working class or the establishment of socialism. Contrasts sharply with the Communist Party's stances—for the fight against fascism, then against the war after the Soviet-German nonaggression pact, then for the war again when that pact was broken, and actively recruiting workers for the capitalist side. • The *Western Socialist* becomes a joint publication of SPC and WSPUS.

(Source: J.M. Milne's *History of The Socialist Party of Canada*.)

—EDITORS

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it does require some effort on the part of those who would seek it. Knowledge of the world we live in and how it operates can be acquired with a minimum of effort. The socialist case can be examined and its validity measured in the light of unfolding events. Whatever the effort the rewards will amply compensate.

The conflict, then, which continues among the nations has as its cause

the effort to realize the surplus-value extracted from the working class, the rival national capitalists must forever vie with one another in the markets of the world and those nations which can sell the most commodities and make the most profit become, in consequence, the most powerful and the most influential.

In this endeavor of the owning class of each country to gain profit, power and influence, however, there can be no real interest for the workers. The mass of people, forced to work for wages or salaries throughout their lives (when they are not unemployed), can never gain more, on the average, than what is required to produce and reproduce their particular abilities. The average worker enters the world heir to nothing but his parents to work and care for him. He spends his life in ceaseless toil or in the search for it, and leaves the world almost as he came into it—with nothing but his children to carry on this tradition of labour.

We, the vast mass of the world, working all our lives and the vast masses who have preceded us back through the ages, have toiled and laboured and yet, after these aeons of work have still only poverty! And why may we ask? Because the means and instruments for producing wealth do not belong to society, as a whole, but to a small but privileged minority who live but to exploit and appropriate unto themselves the fruits of the labour of society. This is the basis for the struggle which they prefer to present to us as a struggle between ideologies, "Ways of Life," and so forth. The so-called struggle between "communism" and the "free, democratic," type of society is actually but a struggle for control over spheres of influence such as Cuba, Berlin, Laos, Vietnam, Africa, and other areas of contention. They are but struggles to gain control over the social wealth of the world.

How can this be altered? What can we do about it? Inasmuch as we are never consulted in time of crisis how can we change this sorry state of things? The answer is simple although

the same basis as the conflict which is inherent in the struggle between capital and labour. The struggle on the part of the employers to extract a maximum amount of labour from their workers for a minimum amount of wages gives rise to the strikes and lockouts which plague all society. In the final analysis, this is but a struggle over the wealth of society and the question of the division of the wealth created by the working class. Furthermore, it should be apparent that those who own the means of life shall amass unto themselves the greater portion of the wealth of society leaving for those who possess nothing but their ability to labour, sufficient only to enable them to continue the process of production.

Let us now return to the question with which we started. What can we do about it? The answer should now be clear. We can apply our understanding of the causes of struggle to an effort to change the world. Rather than attempting to adapt to conditions in the struggle for survival, the task is one of *changing* the conditions in order that the conflicts and strife which are an everyday feature of today shall be resolved. The question of nuclear weapons as opposed to "conventional" weapons is irrelevant. The only weapon required to save the world from obliteration is the weapon of knowledge, in the hands and heads of the majority. Search it out and obtain it, for with it we shall begin to live as human beings rather than as pawns in a life and death struggle for domination over the resources of the world. With the proper application and use of understanding, these resources will be restored to humanity as a whole. We, who are not consulted today, shall with our knowledge and our political action decree that the means of life shall be commonly owned by all mankind and that mankind shall finally be released from the horror of war and the horror of capitalism, in general. *That's* what we can do about it!

—GLADYS CATT

Contact us

Socialist Party of Canada

Box 4280
Victoria, BC V8X 3X8
spc@worldsocialism.org
www.worldsocialism.org/canada/

Regional contacts

Victoria, BC

Bill Johnson
bill__j@hotmail.com

Vancouver, BC

John Ames
jrames@telus.net

Manitoba

Jaime Chinchilla Solano
jaimech@gmail.com

Ontario

John Ayers
jpayers@sympatico.ca

Quebec

Michael Descamps
mich_international@hotmail.com

International contacts

Belgium

martyn.dunmore@pandora.be

Denmark

Graham Taylor
grahamt@sol.dk

Gambia

World of Free Access
gambia@worldsocialism.org

Germany

Norbert
weltsozialismus@gmx.net

India

World Socialist Group
Vill Gobarahanpur
P.O. Amral, Dist. Bankura
72212

Italy

Gian Maria Freddi
Casella Postale n. 7
% Ag. PT VR 32
37131 Verona
gm.freddi@libero.it

Japan

Michael
worldsocialismjapan@hotmail.com

Kenya

Patrick Ndege
P.O. Box 56428
Nairobi

Norway

Robert Stafford
hallblithe@yahoo.com

Sweden

Dag Nilsson
Bergsbrunna villaväg 3B
S-75256 Uppsala

Swaziland

Mandla Ntshakala
P.O. Box 981
Manzini

Zambia

Marxist Education Group
zambia@worldsocialism.org

WSM Companion Parties

The Socialist Party of Canada is just one member of a world-wide association of socialist parties known as the World Socialist Movement:

World Socialist Party of Australia

P.O. Box 1266
North Richmond
Victoria 3121

Socialist Party of Great Britain

52 Clapham High Street,
London SW4 7UN
spgb@worldsocialism.org
www.worldsocialism.org/spgb

World Socialist Party (New Zealand)

P.O. Box 1929
Auckland, NI
www.worldsocialism.org/nz

World Socialist Party

of the United States

P.O. Box 440247
Boston, MA 02144
wspusa@worldsocialism.org
www.worldsocialism.org/usa

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The Socialist Party of Canada

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Canada holds:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into an agent of emancipation and the overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
7. That as political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Canada, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.